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Promoting Sustainability in the Inyo-Mono Region:  
Understanding Regional Groundwater Resources and  
Upgrading Infrastructure in Disadvantaged  
Community Water Systems

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## Introduction

The Inyo-Mono IRWM Plan, its associated projects, and the Inyo-Mono IRWM Proposition 84 Round 2 Implementation Grant proposal “Promoting Sustainability in the Inyo-Mono Region: Understanding Regional Groundwater Resources and Upgrading Infrastructure in Disadvantaged Community Water Systems” help the State address and meet several of the Program Preferences and Statewide Priorities outlined in Section II.F of the 2012 IRWM Guidelines, PRC §75026.(b) and CWC §10544 as described below. Moreover, the Inyo-Mono IRWM planning process has been developed and implemented taking into consideration, from the onset, these Guidelines, and it is consistent with the intent of the Proposition 84 IRWMP Grant Program: to encourage integrated regional strategies for management of water resources and to provide funding for projects that protect communities from drought, protect and improve water quality, and improve local water security by reducing dependency on imported water.

Statewide priorities as developed through the IRWM Program as well as those discussed in the California Water Plan Updates have been considered in crafting the IRWM Plan. The Inyo-Mono Regional Water Management Group recognizes that the major water-related issues in the Inyo-Mono planning region fall well within several of the State Water Plan and Prop. 84 priorities and, accordingly, statewide guidance has been used in the development of the Program’s objectives and resource management strategies as presented in Chapter of the Inyo-Mono IRWM Phase II Plan.

Understanding that successful attainment of the identified Program Preferences is a condition of any grant agreement DWR awards, this proposal presents four projects that have been thoroughly reviewed and screened by the Inyo-Mono RWMG against criteria that were established specific to Proposition 84 requirements, the California Water Plan Update 2009 objectives, and the identified water, ecosystem, and community needs of the Inyo-Mono IRWM region. These project proposals have been developed through an iterative process that included enabling project proponents to submit pre-proposals for evaluation by the RWMG and then developing full proposals in conjunction with the IRWM Program Office staff to submit as part of an overall program application.

The four project proposals that are being submitted as part of this application are, in order of ranking by the RWMG:

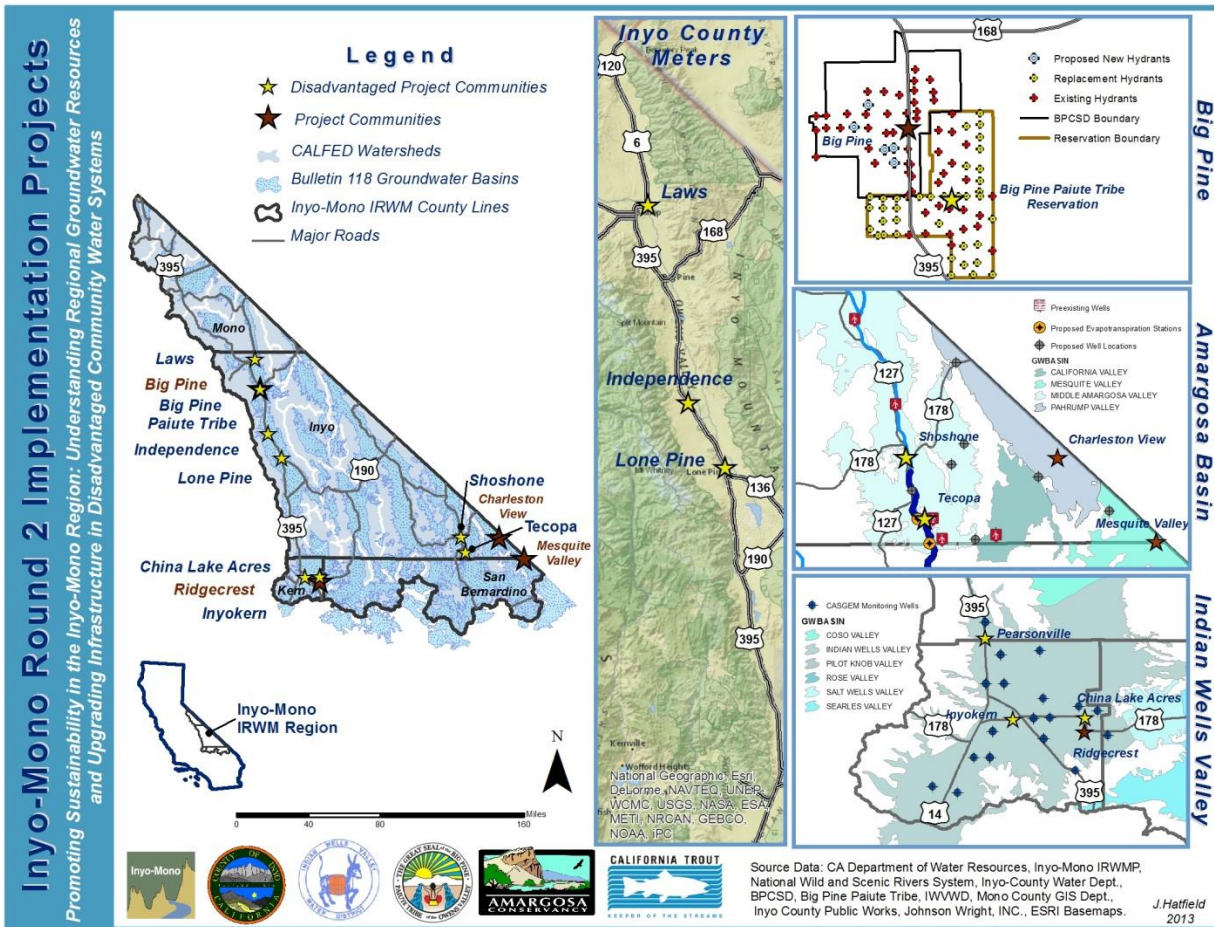
1. Big Pine Fire Protection Improvement Project
2. Amargosa Basin Water, Ecosystem Sustainability, and Disadvantaged Communities Project
3. Inyo County Disadvantaged Communities Meters Project
4. Indian Wells Valley Groundwater Basin Brackish Water Resources Study

## Program Preferences

The set of four projects included herein addresses the Program Preferences in the following ways:

### 1) Include regional projects or programs

The funding proposal submitted by the Inyo-Mono Regional Water Management Group for Round 2 Implementation represents a united effort on behalf of a regional program. The proposal serves to meet three of the highest priority and most thematic needs for our region: improving understanding of groundwater, upgrading antiquated and dysfunctional infrastructure, and addressing the needs of disadvantaged communities (DACs), Native American tribes, and small water systems. The proposal includes two projects that will make significant strides in our understanding of the location, amount, and quality of groundwater in two of the larger basins within the Inyo-Mono region. Three projects provide direct benefits to disadvantaged communities, including one Native American tribe; the fourth indirectly benefits DACs in addition to non-DACs. Two projects help to improve infrastructure for small water systems in the region that otherwise have little ability to implement infrastructure upgrades. While all the projects in this proposal are located in the southern half of the planning region (see figure below), the projects still cover a considerable geographic span given the size of the planning region.



## 2) Effectively integrate water management programs and projects within a hydrologic region

All of the Inyo-Mono IRWM region is located in the Lahontan region of the Regional Water Quality Control Board (Region 6). The Inyo-Mono Regional Water Management Group consists of 32 signatories to a memorandum of understanding. The integration of ideas and needs that results from regular meetings of the RWMG has led to the prioritized list of projects reflected in this proposal.

In addition to integrating interests and programs within the region, the Inyo-Mono IRWM Program Office coordinated with representatives of three other IRWM regions in the Lahontan funding/RWQCB region during the development of this proposal. A letter of mutual agreement resulted from these conversations and is included as a supporting document with the proposal.

### **3) Effectively resolve significant water-related conflicts within or between regions**

Although no projects being submitted for this round of funding directly aim to reduce water-related conflict within the planning region, many of the projects will help water managers ensure more intelligent and efficient use of water, thereby potentially reducing confrontations over limited water resources. Moreover, implementing the Inyo-Mono IRWM Plan will continue to develop and facilitate stronger relationships amongst stakeholders that have had a history of water conflicts in the region. The relationship-building and sharing of information that is occurring as part of the IRWM planning process is unprecedented in the Inyo-Mono region, and continued support of this effort will aid in finding shared understanding of the water-related issues facing the region and, more importantly, develop agreement on how to address critical resource challenges.

### **4) Contribute to attainment of one or more of the objectives of the CALFED Bay-Delta Program**

The Inyo-Mono Planning Region is outside of the geographic scope of the CALFED Bay-Delta region and, thus, this preference is not relevant.

### **5) Address critical water supply or water quality needs of DACs within the region**

All four projects directly or indirectly address critical water supply and/or quality needs of DACs in the Inyo-Mono region:

Big Pine Fire Protection Improvement Project provides increased fire flow capacity to a Native American tribe that is also a DAC, after a decade that included many fires that resulted in the loss of 26 homes on the reservation and adjacent town of Big Pine.

Amargosa Basin Water, Ecosystem Sustainability, and Disadvantaged Communities Project will provide needed hydrologic data to help inform the management of water resources for two disadvantaged communities in the area (Shoshone and Tecopa). Currently, Tecopa has very little potable water available to the community. Most residents travel to purchase their water in Pahrump, NV, 30 miles away.

Inyo County Disadvantaged Communities Meters Project will replace aging and dysfunctional water meters in three disadvantaged communities in Inyo County: Laws, Independence, and Lone Pine. Substantial improvements are needed in these three systems, and this project represents an early step in the process.

Indian Wells Valley Groundwater Basin Brackish Water Resources Study involves investigating brackish water resources throughout the entire basin. Although the proponent of the project is not a DAC, the results of the study will have implications, and possibly

benefits, for the DACs within the Indian Wells Valley basin: Inyokern and Searles Valley (made up of the communities of Trona, Argus, Pioneer Point, and Valley Wells).

## **6) Effectively integrate water management with land use planning**

The proposed groundwater studies in the Amargosa Basin and the Indian Wells Valley Basin will provide information on water resources relevant to land use planning, such as siting housing developments and solar energy projects, managing a Wild & Scenic river, and protecting recreational access to water and water-dependent ecosystems. The Inyo-Mono RWMG is continuing to look for opportunities to coordinate these efforts and promote partnerships between land management and water management agencies.

## **7) For eligible SWFM funding, projects which: a) are not receiving State funding for flood control or flood prevention projects pursuant to PRC §5096.824 or §75034 or b) provide multiple benefits, including, but not limited to, water quality improvements, ecosystem benefits, reduction of instream erosion and sedimentation, and groundwater recharge.**

The Inyo-Mono IRWM Plan does not include any projects eligible for SWFM funding and, thus, this preference is not relevant.

## **8) Address Statewide Priorities**

The table on the next depicts how each of the four projects included in this proposal addresses the eight statewide priorities.

	Proposed Projects			
Statewide Priority	Big Pine Fire Protection Improvement	Amargosa Basin Water, Ecosystem Sustainability, and Disadvantaged Communities	Inyo County Disadvantaged Communities Meters	Indian Wells Valley Groundwater Basin Brackish Water Resources
Drought Preparedness	★	★	★	★
Use and Reuse Water More Efficiently		★	★	★
Climate Change Response Actions		★		
Expand Environmental Stewardship		★		
Practice Integrated Flood Management				
Protect Surface Water and Groundwater Quality		★		
Improve Tribal Water and Natural Resources	★			
Ensure Equitable Distribution of Benefits	★	★	★	